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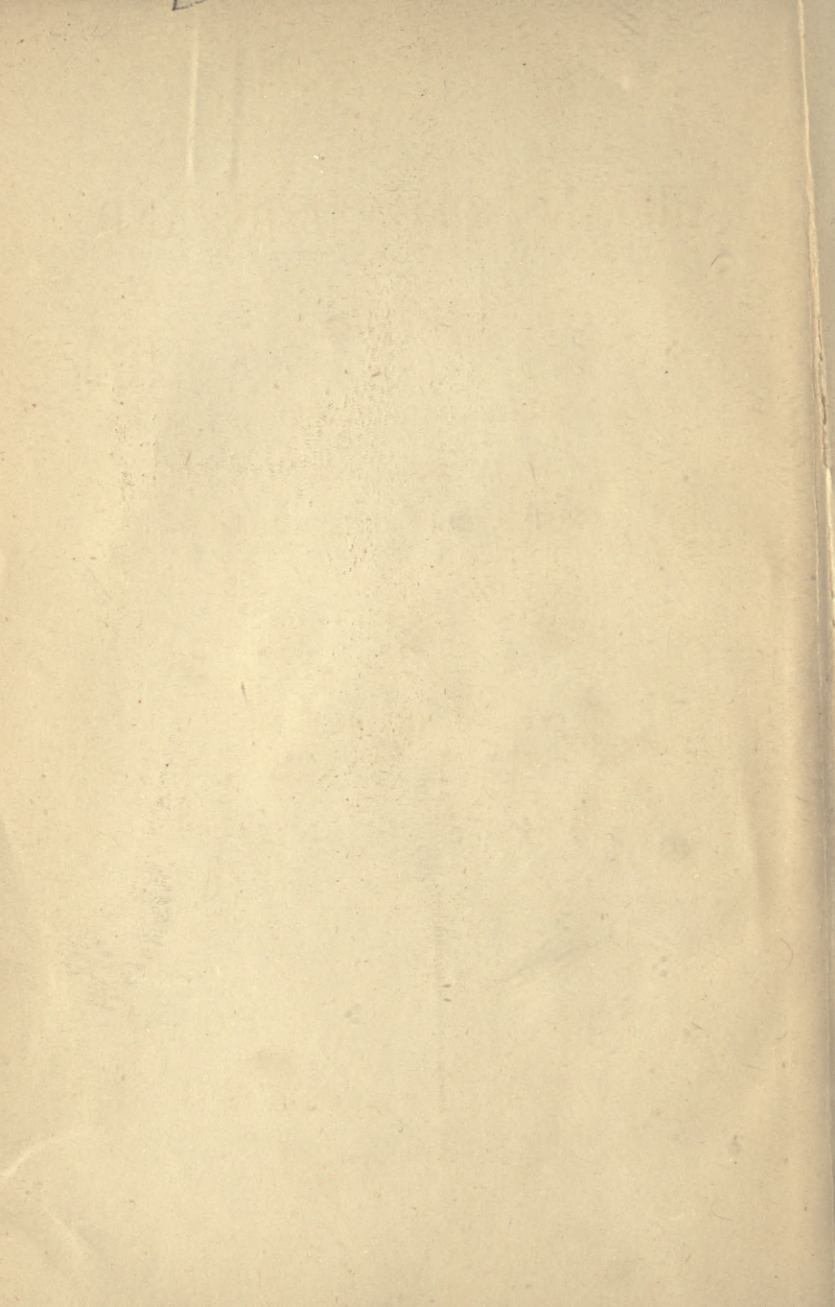
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Organs, organists and choirs

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W. F. McNally



ORGANS, ORGANISTS, AND CHOIRS.

A BOOK OF HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR ALL
INTERESTED IN
NONCONFORMIST CHURCH MUSIC.

BY

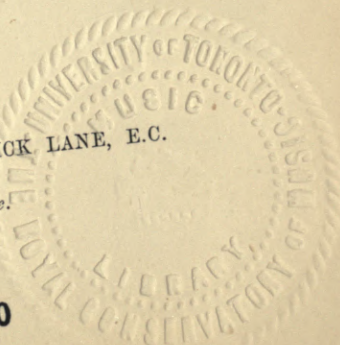
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PREFACE.

THIS little work is intended chiefly for young organists and other inexperienced persons interested in Nonconformist Church Music. After twenty-six years experience (as man and boy) in the capacity of organist in the Village Chapel (Leatherhead); the Country Town (Old Chapel, now Christ Church, Oswestry); the Suburban Church (Oaklands Chapel, Shepherd's Bush); and one of the Cathedrals of Nonconformity (the City Temple, London) I know something of the difficulties connected with the music in almost every kind of church. My hope is that what I have written may be found practically useful and beneficial to our worship music. If that desire should be realised my labour will not have been in vain.

E. MINSHALL.

THE CITY TEMPLE, LONDON, E.C.

November, 1886.

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ORGANS, ORGANISTS, AND CHOIRS.



THE PURCHASE OF, AND THE BEST POSITION FOR, AN ORGAN.



EVERY congregation desires to possess an organ if possible, but unfortunately in many instances the funds available are such that an American organ or harmonium has to suffice. Though these are poor substitutes for a good pipe organ, they must not be despised, for in some places they do good service. Of the two we much prefer an American Organ, as its tone is sweet, and partakes somewhat of the tone of a pipe organ. On the other hand, more expression can be got out of a harmonium, and its tone is more penetrating. If in any way it is possible, however, it is far better to have a pipe organ, as it greatly helps the psalmody and adds beauty and dignity to the service.

When a church decides to introduce a new organ, the plan usually adopted is to appoint a committee to take the matter in hand. This committee is usually composed of gentlemen who are supposed to be musical, and to be fair judges of music; speaking generally, however, they know

little or nothing about the construction and other details of an organ. Though they may be perfectly competent to give an opinion on the tone of the instrument after it has been built, they have not sufficient practical knowledge to enable them, with confidence and security, to take the first steps towards procuring it. There are tricks in organ building as well as in other trades, and some of these are occasionally practised on those likely to be taken in. For instance, a committee may be inclined to accept a specification because it promises more stops than the others, not knowing that some of the stops are divided and have two names—one for the treble and the other for the bass—thus giving the proposed organ the appearance of being much larger than it really is. Or another specification may be tempting because it contains more pipes than any of the others, whereas a practical man would at once see that the more expensive pipes were “conspicuous by their absence,” and the organ was made up of a large proportion of small scale pipes. An inexperienced committee may likewise not observe “scamping” in the construction, and faults of other kinds. It would be wise, therefore, on the part of any such committee to seek at the outset the counsel of some practical organist in whom they could trust, otherwise they will be at the mercy of the builder they employ.

It may be well to give some general suggestions for the guidance of those thinking of having an organ.

The instrument selected should be one suited to the building in which it is to be placed. Complaints certainly cannot often be made that the organ is too large for the chapel, but it is a rather frequent occurrence to find one too small. This arises no doubt chiefly from the want of funds. If the amount at disposal is not sufficient to pay for an instrument adapted to the building, but there seems a fair prospect of getting enough at some future time, the

best plan is to accept the specification of a really satisfactory organ, and put in at once as much as the funds will permit, leaving the remainder to be added at some future time. The fact that the organ is incomplete, and also the desire to hear the effect of it as originally designed, will act as a spur to many persons to provide money for the completion of the work.

An organ should not be cramped for room, but every part of it ought to be so arranged that it can be got at quickly in case anything goes wrong. Moreover, nothing is so likely to cause faults as being packed away in half its legitimate space. Architects are frequently to blame for this. In preparing designs of new chapels, not being practical organists, they do not understand the necessity of giving plenty of room for the "box of whistles," but seem to think, in many instances, that any hole or corner will do for it. The mistake is not found out unfortunately till it is too late to remedy it. The consequence is that "stickings," "cypherings," &c. are constantly taking place, and instead of the organist being able to get inside to put things to rights, the organ builder has to be called in to undertake the work, which generally means expense more or less. Every part of an organ ought to be within reach at a few moments' notice. Too much stress, therefore, cannot be laid on the necessity for giving the organ plenty of breathing room.

Where shall the organ be placed? Much of course depends upon the style of building in which it is to be erected, but our opinion is that, if possible, it should be at the back of the minister in a gallery or recess. The choir ought also to be in the same gallery in front of the organ. There can be no better position than this for leading the singing. The congregation can see as well as hear the choir, and with two senses in use instead of one the result

ought to be more satisfactory. The organ may be made very ornamental as well as useful in this position. If tastefully decorated it adds very much to the beauty of the chapel, and if the case is neatly designed, and other things are in keeping, the general effect is good. Beware of placing it behind the congregation, for naturally people like to have their leaders in front of them, and if placed behind, congregational singing will not be nearly so good. In some places the organ is purposely placed quite out of sight, as if it was something to be ashamed of. The object of this is not very apparent, and certainly it does not meet with general approval.

All organ chambers should be avoided, unless it is the wish of a congregation to lose much of the effect of the organ. If an instrument is boxed up the tone cannot get out promptly, and even when it does penetrate into the main building it has lost half its force. It is a very common practice in the Church of England to place the organ in a chamber off the chancel, but in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the effect is bad. An organ does not have fair play under such conditions. The more open the position, the more freely and fully the tone travels.

Under no circumstances place an organ close up to a damp outside wall, for there is no greater enemy to an instrument than damp, and the evil becomes apparent in all sorts of ways, and at all times. Great and permanent injury may be done to an organ if once exposed to damp for any length of time.

It is an excellent plan, if it can be arranged, for the keyboard to be placed some distance in front of the pipes, so that the player may face his choir. He can thus easily communicate with them, and by a look call attention to any fault in the singing. He also by this means hears his

organ to much greater advantage, and can modify the amount of tone more correctly than if situated almost in the instrument. Many a player drowns the singing unconsciously because the tone passes over his head. On the other hand, a feeble accompaniment frequently arises from the same cause. It must be added, however, that should the pipes be placed in a close chamber, and the keyboard some distance away, the effect on the ear is occasionally far from pleasant, as in quick passages the tone reaches the player as he is striking the following chord, which is most confusing. To play the "Hallelujah Chorus" under such circumstances (as was once our lot at a choral festival) is not conducive to tranquillity of mind or temper.

How shall the organ be blown? If it be a small instrument, a man or boy is equal to the work. If, however, it is of any size either a gas-engine or hydraulic engine is used. As a gas-engine is now made to work silently probably that is the best means to employ. For economy it is decidedly so, but there is the inconvenience of having to go to it to start it each time it is required to work. There is also rather more danger than with water. The hydraulic engine can be put in motion by means of a lever, or some similar contrivance, fixed near the key-board. In many places, however, the pressure of water is not great enough to work a hydraulic engine, so gas is more generally used. It need hardly be pointed out that mechanical blowing is far preferable to manual labour, as it is so much more steady. Moreover, an organist is independent of a sleepy or disagreeable blower, who, as one of the "we," lays strong claims to a large share in any credit that may be bestowed upon the organ performance. The first cost of an engine may be serious, but probably the annual sum paid for gas or water would be less than a man would require for his service.

HOW TO SELECT AN ORGANIST.

THERE is no fixed method of selecting an organist that can be adapted to all churches. "Circumstances alter cases," and very much depends upon the financial circumstances of a congregation. It may be well, however, to give some suggestions as to the best mode of procedure on the part of a church requiring an organist. Provided there is no suitable person known to any of the friends belonging to the place, there is no course open but to seek the service of a stranger. An advertisement is usually inserted in a musical paper (generally "The Musical Times" or "Musical Standard"). The most straightforward way is to distinctly state what the duties are, and the salary offered in return. Frequently, however, the advertisement says "State salary required," the hope being that in this way a fine player may be caught at a low figure. This is a very unsatisfactory plan, for sometimes a person "out of a berth" (as the expression goes) would agree to accept the appointment at a nominal salary in order to make it a stepping stone to a more lucrative post; or if he remains any length of time

he will be constantly complaining of the smallness of the stipend, or that the prospects of a teaching connection held out to him have not been realised. There will, therefore, constantly be an unsettled feeling on both sides, which must be detrimental to the interests of the church. Again, many organists of experience and good repute decline to reply to an advertisement thus worded, so that, generally speaking, the replies are from inferior performers. A church must know exactly what sum can be given as the organist's salary, and the business-like way of procedure is to state distinctly what that sum is. Any person seeking an appointment then knows at once whether it is worth his while to become a candidate for the vacancy, and the church secretary is not burdened with any except *bond fide* applicants, nor with letters asking for further information. It would be well if these advertisements were more frequently inserted in the denominational papers than they have hitherto been, for applications would then probably be received from some fully in sympathy with the work of the church.

An advertisement of any vacancy of importance will usually bring forth many replies from "all sorts and conditions of men," all of them well qualified, in their own estimation, and prepared to give every satisfaction if they should be honoured with the appointment. How are these replies to be weeded down, and how can the chaff be separated from the wheat, and then the "finest of the wheat" finally selected? What experience a man has had, and where his experience has been gained, the reasons for his leaving his last appointment, the kind of master he studied under, these are points which would considerably assist in sorting the applications. Testimonials should often be regarded with some amount of distrust unless the persons who give the testimonials are known. The standard

of a person writing a character may be much lower than that fixed by a church, so though there may be no dishonesty there may be great mistakes. Moreover, the writer of the testimonial may be a very incompetent judge of a good or bad organist. Not much difficulty will, however, generally be found in reducing the applicants to say six or eight, the trouble is to determine which is the best of these.

What qualifications should an applicant have for the post of organist in a Nonconformist chapel? It is very desirable that he should be a Nonconformist, and other things being something like equal, that should tell greatly in his favour. It is a fatal mistake to engage a gentleman, however good a player he may be, who is opposed to the spirit of nonconformity. He cannot possibly enter into the service with feelings of true earnestness of heart, though possibly he may put a certain amount of mechanical fire into his work. It is perfectly clear that a Roman Catholic or a strong churchman would not become the organist of a Nonconformist chapel except for the salary, and an organist to be a real success, must show some further interest in his work than merely the monetary gain. A great point, therefore, is to have a Nonconformist if a competent one offers his services.

He should also be amiable and likely to work well with his choir. Musicians have the reputation (and deservedly so in many instances) of being very "touchy" people. If the choir should be composed of these "touchy" people, and the organist should happen to be of a similar nature, the probability is that things will not work very smoothly in the musical department of church work. An organist should be firm, and keep his choir in order and under proper discipline, but this can be done in such a way as not to cause offence even to those who are easily offended.

The choir, being voluntary, act with a certain amount of independence and naturally won't put up with abrupt or brusque treatment from the organist. Firmness, with quietness and gentle manner, will secure for the organist the respect of the choir, and having once gained that he can mould them as he likes.

It is necessary he should be a good accompanist rather than a good solo player, though so much the better if the both can be found combined. Very much depends upon the organist in leading the singing in Nonconformist worship. The choir and congregation lean on him, so to speak, though it is unfortunate it is so. If the organist accidentally goes wrong or plays an independent part, the choir wonder what has happened, and the singing nearly breaks down. He must have the power to keep them together and quickly rectify any unsteadiness, and a variety of other things which are fully dealt with in another chapter. Many congregations appoint a man because he is a fine performer, not knowing that more often than not, a great solo player is a poor accompanist; the mistake is quickly found out, and a change becomes necessary. A man who can play with taste and expression, and make the meaning of the words reach the hearts of the congregation, is an invaluable help to any church. It seems therefore especially desirable that the organist should be one who can make the singing "go."


Presuming that some such qualifications are considered necessary, how can it be discovered which of the six or eight candidates possesses them to the largest extent? A very usual course is for a small committee appointed by the church, assisted by a professional organist, to hear the competitors play, first a piece of their own selection and then another chosen by the professional organist. This is right so far as it goes, but it is not a sufficient test. As

before pointed out, a man may be a good soloist but a poor accompanist. Some trial of his abilities in the latter capacity therefore must take place. The best plan is for each candidate to accompany the choir in a hymn and chant, and these should be selected with the view of giving him plenty of scope to display his ideas as to light and shade and expression generally. Well-known hymns such as "O worship the King," "Spirit Divine! attend our prayers," or "Gracious Spirit, dwell with me" would be suitable. All the competitors having gone through the several tests, the judges can form an opinion pretty accurately which is the most accomplished, while the professional organist can render them much assistance by pointing out which man uses his instrument most skilfully, and with the best taste and judgment. The final verdict, however, should not even yet be given. Some men show to great disadvantage in a competition of this kind owing to nervousness, but frequently prove good organists when once settled in their work. Others are affected in exactly the opposite manner. They play with ease and readiness at a competition in private, but sadly want nerve and presence of mind when they have to lead a large congregation, especially if any slip happens to take place, or anything needing quick correction. The two or three best players, therefore, out of the last list should be requested to play one or two Sundays each. The congregation would then hear what each could do, and the judges, having kept a record of the previous examination, should now be in a position to say without mistake which of the many competitors should receive the appointment.

It may be said that this is a somewhat lengthy process of sifting, and so it is, but the appointment of an organist is a matter of considerable importance, and a wrong choice may result in much evil. A hurried or off-hand selection,

therefore, should certainly not be made, but every possible care taken to secure the right man for the position.

Supposing a church has succeeded in getting an organist of ability, in whom they can trust, and who is thoroughly qualified in all respects to undertake the duties, his position should be one of considerable freedom. All musical matters should be under his control. The selection of the music, and the way in which it should be rendered, are matters that ought to be decided by him alone, without interference or fault finding from others. Nothing makes a man lose interest in his work more than constant complaints. It is utterly impossible to please everybody in any congregation. What one person likes, the man in the next pew greatly dislikes. The only sensible course, therefore, is to leave the matter entirely in the hands of the man most qualified to form an opinion and be guided by what he thinks best.



An organist should, however, in all things try to please the minister and aid him in his work. Good music often makes good preaching, and unsuitable music has a very depressing effect upon both minister and congregation. The minister's wishes should therefore be consulted, and if he and the organist are both men of good common sense, there will be little difficulty in working amicably together with good results to the music of the church.

Opinion differs as to whether the organist should also be choirmaster, or whether the post would be better filled by another person. The balance of opinion, however, is decidedly in favour of the organist holding both appointments. If he is a fairly competent man, he should be able to train his choir to sing such music as is generally necessary for church use. If there are two rulers in the camp there is a chance of a conflict of views taking place. A choir-master may direct his choir to sing in one way, but if the

organist does not agree with that rendering, he has the power of going his own way with disastrous results to the singing. In the great majority of cases it will be found better to combine the two offices in one person, though it must be admitted that here and there instances are found of organist and choirmaster working together with excellent results.

THE FORMATION OF A CHOIR.
RULES FOR A VOLUNTARY CHOIR.
CHOIR PRACTICES.

IN the present day of wide-spread musical education there ought not to be great difficulty in getting together, in any church, a fairly good voluntary choir to conduct the musical part of the services. Thirty years ago well-to-do persons, for the most part, considered it as lowering to their position to join the choir of the place they attended, and those who willingly gave their services and assisted in the worship of God were looked upon as inferior beings. Things have altered, however, and now we find in many of our choirs the young people belonging to the leading families of the congregation. This is exactly as it should be, for who can so well or so heartily take up this department of church work as those who have received a thoroughly good education, and whose interests are centred in the place. In forming a choir, therefore, the help of such persons should be first sought. It will probably be necessary to seek further assistance, the ranks of those in a lower social scale usually supplying what is required, and it is pleasing to note that, in most places the members (although

frequently occupying very different positions in life) will work amicably and agreeably together.

In the Church of England boys are generally employed to sing the treble part, but in Nonconformist places, mixed choirs are preferred. It is a much discussed question whether women or boys produce the most satisfactory result. Boys' voices are sweet, though sometimes shrill and penetrating. There is also a lightness in them which gives brightness to the singing. Boys are likewise more brisk in their attack, and consequently there is much less tendency to drag. On the other hand, women's voices are more mature and mellow, and are used with much more expression. Moreover a woman's voice will last for many years, whereas a boy's is gone very shortly after it becomes of much use. Another reason in favour of the ladies is that they usually behave with decorum, but boys require constant correction for unseemly conduct. Upon the whole, the best plan seems to be to have a mixture of women and boys, for the effect of the various qualities of both voices is thus obtained, and the presence of ladies frequently acts beneficially in regard to the behaviour of the boys. Taking it for granted, then, that boys are admitted into the choir, with a view of getting recruits, there can be no objection to very young boys attending the practices—in fact, the younger the better, provided they seem to have some idea of music, because the longer are they likely to be of service. It is very annoying when a boy, upon whom much trouble has been taken in making him a good singer, leaves for some other place just as he is beginning to show the good results and be of exceptional value. It is desirable, therefore, if possible, to get the parents at the outset to agree to let him remain for a fixed time, and as a general principle it may be said that his fourteenth birthday should be the date of his release.

The qualifications necessary for choir members should be settled by the organist, but as is obvious, they must vary in different places. In some large churches the applications to join the choir are so numerous that a high standard can be set up. In other places, where singers are "few and far between," persons of very moderate musical ability have to be accepted, and the organist is thankful for small mercies. It is desirable, however, that every member should be able to read music fairly well, also possess a voice of good quality and compass, and undertake to attend with something like regularity the weekly practice and the two Sunday services. If an applicant fulfils these conditions he or she will almost certainly be of real service.

It is an excellent plan to have honorary members of the choir to take the place of those who may be absent from any cause whatever. Many well qualified persons who do not care to bind themselves to regular duty would be quite willing to act as "stop gaps" every now and again. A choir pew half full is depressing both to the singers and congregation—in fact, the few singers present would do better if the vacant seats were filled with "dummies." If they can be filled with real assistants so much the better. Some persons like to think themselves indispensable, and occasionally stay away in order that their loss may be duly felt. The help of honorary members would counteract such nonsense, for if these self-conceited nobodies found that their places were easily filled up, they would probably think less of themselves, and attend to their duties more regularly. With honorary members ready to work when called upon, an organist can act with a considerable amount of independence—a very valuable thing in many places under certain circumstances.

In those places where the choir consists of persons not

immediately connected with the church—such as young persons engaged as assistants in warehouses, &c.—an annual excursion or supper or both, provided by the church, is a desirable institution. Such people naturally look for some recognition of their services, and though the work may be taken up as a “labour of love,” at times they have to give up other pleasures to attend choir practices or Sunday services. There must always be some self-sacrifice on the part of a person joining a voluntary choir, and some return (not necessarily expensive) is expected. Many are satisfied with a cheering word occasionally from the minister, but others look for something more substantial, and for such, a day’s strip is perhaps the best recognition that can be offered them. The deacons are hardly likely to grudge this expense, for if the music is rendered in anything like a satisfactory manner it is “cheap at the price.”

It is difficult to frame a set of rules for a voluntary choir, but for the sake of discipline it is better that the several duties should be clearly defined and agreed to. At the same time it must be admitted that rules can only be enforced with the greatest discretion, and probably in the great majority of cases, more could be done by gentle persuasion on the part of the organist than a rigid enforcement of a set of laws. The following would be found suitable for most places, though others might have to be added in some cases :—

RULES FOR THE CHOIR OF CHURCH (OR
CHAPEL).

1. The Organist to have power to admit any person as a member, or dismiss any member on the ground of incompetence or irregularity in attendance.
2. Every member to attend, regularly and punctually,

the practices on evenings and at the services on Sunday at a.m. and p.m. The organist to keep a record of the attendance of each member.

3. Any member intending to be absent from any service, to give the organist notice thereof as early as possible, in order that a suitable substitute may be found.
4. Each member to act in obedience to the organist, and carry out his directions as to the rendering of the music.
5. Any member wishing to resign, to give the organist at least a fortnight's notice to that effect.
6. Each member to behave reverently, and as far as possible set a good example to others.

Choir practices are sometimes very interesting and useful, and occasionally very dull and valueless. Much depends upon the way in which they are conducted. Some organists are not particular about being punctual. They seem to think that as it is not a service it will not matter if they appear ten minutes late. This is a great mistake, for few things are so likely to make the choir indifferent. The organist of all persons should be ready to begin at the appointed time, and begin he should, even if there are but a handful there.

Experience seems to say that the practices should not be held in the church, but in a school or class-room with a piano or American organ, the former preferred. It may be necessary for the organist to beat time or move about amongst the choir while they are singing, to remedy errors. He should therefore have an assistant to play for him at such times. It is, however, well to do much of the work without any instrument at all. Little mistakes, which are hidden if an instrument is used, are thus more easily discovered and rectified, and the choir have to place

more reliance upon themselves. If a choir constantly sing with an organ, they wait for it to lead them instead of singing independently, so that it comes to be organ playing with vocal accompaniment, rather than singing with organ accompaniment. It is very essential, therefore, that much of the polishing at least, should be done with the voices alone, though the rough edge will be more quickly taken off with the aid of the piano.

The first work to be done at the practice is, of course, to prepare what is appointed for the Sunday services. It is hardly necessary to go through all the hymns—any well-known ones may certainly be passed over. When the hymn and tune books recently published come into general use, it will be less requisite than ever to practice any hymns that are frequently sung, as marks of expression are so wisely affixed that only gross carelessness can cause want of uniformity of expression. Of course all new tunes or those only indifferently known require careful rehearsal. The chants should be carefully gone through, as so much depends upon close attention to the pointing, and although the words may be often sung, the various little matters of detail are liable to be overlooked if not rehearsed. The anthems should also be sung. It is, perhaps, rather uninteresting to choirs generally to practise nothing but what is required for the following Sunday's services, so it is desirable to have something else in rehearsal in addition. Choruses from the oratorios, or anthems more elaborate than those usually used in the church, cantatas, or secular pieces, are all suitable for the purpose, and induce the choir to attend in larger numbers. Of course the time spent on working up these pieces is not lost if no further use is made of them, but generally they would come in usefully at a choir concert, or some meeting of a special character where such music is wanted. It is perfectly

clear that to keep a choir together the members must have something to practice equal to their abilities, otherwise they will seek to belong to a choir where their taste can be gratified. There is some danger, however, in taking up a work with solos in it, for unless there is a soloist in each part far away superior to his or her fellow singers, an offence will be caused to some by the organist appointing another to take the solo. A man with a very high opinion of his own abilities is usually deaf to all argument that his voice or his style is not adapted to a particular solo. He will probably think, and possibly say, that the organist wishes to snub him or to pay a compliment to the other person. Such unpleasant episodes must be treated with judgment and discretion.

To avoid another cause of offence, the organist must treat all the members of the choir alike. If he is friendly and shakes hands with Mr. A., who is a well-to-do man and a deacon, and merely gives a nod, and sometimes not that, to Mr. B., who happens to be a grocer's assistant, the latter will soon find that his feelings are hurt, and forthwith resigns. At the practice, the organist has the chance of making himself agreeable all round, and though he, like any one else, is entitled to have his preferences, on these occasions it is desirable that he should treat all alike, and his treatment should be of a friendly kind, and such as will gain for him the respect of those with whom he has to work. The practice, therefore, may frequently be made the means of healing differences, as well as causing them.

At the practice every detail should be prepared for the Sunday, in order to avoid the perpetual communications (written and verbal) that pass between organist and choir during service in some churches. It is very unseemly for a choir to be constantly talking, or for the organist to be

giving directions, when once the service has commenced. A little forethought would prevent the necessity for such proceedings, and therefore the organist must be answerable for what takes place.

A matter often neglected at a choir practice is the clear pronunciation of the words. Boys are specially at fault in this respect, but a little correction should have the effect of putting them right. How often "moy" is sung for "my," "guites" for "gates," "anguls" for "angels," and h's are treated with the greatest freedom. Such serious mistakes should be remedied at the earliest moment.

It is most desirable that the congregation should attend the choir practices, but unfortunately they are "conspicuous by their absence." Many attempts have been made in various ways to induce them to come, but, except in a very few instances, without success. Ministers, however, should impress upon them that if things are to be done "decently and in order" as a matter of duty, they should prepare to take their part in the service, as much as the choir and himself try to come prepared. Unless an argument of this kind will induce them to attend it is doubtful if any other means will.

A word must be said as to the behaviour of choirs, for unfortunately it is almost proverbial that their conduct is not at all seemly. Sitting in a prominent position, and taking a leading part in the service they should be exceedingly careful that they do nothing to cause unpleasant remarks, or to disturb the sanctity of the place, or the solemnity of the service. There should be no whispering one to the other, enquiring the number of the next tune, or remarks on the mistakes made in the anthem just sung, &c. &c. All

unnecessary turning over of books, motioning one to another, and things of that kind, should not be allowed. If choirs could only be impressed with the sacredness of their work, and their influence upon those who see and hear them, there would be much less cause to complain of what is now a very common fault.

THE ACCOMPANIMENT OF THE SERVICE.

It is hardly possible to teach an organ student to be a really efficient accompanist unless he is endowed with some taste in that direction. Certain fixed rules, and suggestions likely to assist him, can be given, but experience, in addition to natural ability, is necessary before he can be thoroughly depended on. In the Church of England the choir sing almost independently of the organ, but in Nonconformist churches the organ has to lead, and keep the singing steady and in tune, and if the player is tempted to vary the music much by re-arranging the harmonies, the choir and congregation at first, at any-rate, wonder what is happening. If no other benefit arose from an organist judiciously varying the music before him, much would be gained by making the choir capable of singing quite independently of the organ, or without it altogether, if necessary. Before going into the details of the service, it will be well to touch upon some points that bear upon accompaniments generally, and offer some suggestions that we hope will in some degree assist young musicians and others to become efficient church organists.

Should the organ be played loudly or softly? Much depends upon the size of the congregation, the style of the singing, and a variety of other circumstances. Some persons maintain that at all times the organ playing should be strictly an accompaniment—that is, nothing more than a support to the vocal part, and consequently always subdued, though varying somewhat in quantity of tone according to the sentiment of the words and the amount of voice tone put forth by the congregation. To some extent this may be correct, for it is very distressing to hear a congregation drowned by a wretched organ indifferently played, which is by no means a rare occurrence. On the other hand, many congregations will respond heartily to the organ, and, when in verses needing vigorous and hearty singing, the organist makes full use of his instrument, the people sing accordingly, and a grand effect is produced. Provided the organ is adapted to the building there can be no possible objection to its full power being heard at times, in fact, it is desirable, but under no circumstances whatever should an organist let the singing and playing degenerate into mere noise. Such a verse as—

“The whole triumphant host
Give thanks to God on high:
Hail, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!
They ever cry:
Hail, Abraham’s God and ours!
We join the heavenly lays,
And celebrate with all our powers
His endless praise,”

seems to demand every voice at its full strength, and every available instrument at its loudest tone to give it its proper effect, while such a hymn as

“Sinful, sighing to be blest”

wants a tender, pathetic, and altogether subdued rendering throughout. A player of refined taste and

good judgment can by means of his organ put marvellous effect into the singing of a hymn.

Let us point out some of the methods an organist can adopt to secure proper expression in the hymns. Some players seem to consider it necessary to use the pedal organ right through a whole service. They may possibly think the full deep tone thus produced gives fulness and dignity to the singing which is to some extent true, but a verse here and there played without the pedals, is a great relief and an improvement. A verse sung in unison, sometimes tells out well, especially if the organist puts in varied harmonies. If the congregation sing in parts, however, the original harmonies must be adhered to, or the discords will be unbearable. Only certain tunes, of course, admit of unison treatment, owing to the melody being outside the compass of some of the voices. The first verse of a hymn sung in unison often gives great boldness and precision to the singing. A verse requiring very tender treatment, may be rendered by four voices only. If sung sweetly and with pathetic expression, it will certainly touch the hearts of the congregation. Such verses as the following are suitable to be thus sung—

“ And some are pressed with worldly care,
And some are tried with sinful doubt ;
And some such greivous passions tear,
That only Thou canst cast them out.”

“ Silent Spirit, dwell with me—
I myself would quiet be ;
Quiet as the growing blade,
Which through earth its way hath made ;
Silently, like morning light
Putting mists and chills to flight.”

In the latter instance the effect is further increased by the whole congregation accompanied by the full organ vigorously singing the verse immediately following, viz.—

“Mighty Spirit, dwell with me—
 I myself would mighty be;
 Mighty so as to prevail
 Where unaided man must fail;
 Ever, by a mighty hope,
 Pressing on, and bearing up.”

Although there is a risk of over-doing it, the organist can occasionally put considerable effect into a single word, either by means of the swell pedal or by suddenly and for a moment only, making a marked change in the quantity of tone. For instance, in Lyte's well-known hymn, “Abide with me,” and in the last verse, there occurs the following line:—

“In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.”

There should be a good body of tone at the beginning of the line, but “in death” might be accompanied with telling effect on a very soft swell organ, returning to the great organ for the rest of the line. W. T. Matson's beautiful hymn,

“Lord, I was blind! I could not see”

is capable of being treated throughout with great variety. We will, however, simply here point out the climax which comes in the last verse, and should be played somewhat as follows:—

Example I.

mf

Lord, Thou hast made the blind to see, The

cres. *f* *ff*

deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, The dead to live; and

accel. *rall.*

lo, I break The chains of my cap - tiv - i - ty.

Up to the word "live" a fairly soft organ might be used, gradually increasing in tone, but on the word "lo" a sudden *sforzando* chord on the full organ would come out with fine effect, followed by a hastening of the time for the next five or six chords, the verse ending with a short *rallantando*. (See also remarks on Example IX.)

Very frequently sufficient variation of tone can be produced by the judicious use of the swell pedal, especially if the swell organ be a large one. Young players, however, should be on their guard against the liability to constant pumping which is not only fatal to good pedal playing, but bad in effect.

"Word painting" is another constant stumbling block. Who could listen with gravity and pleasure to an organist

who on coming to the passage "his word runneth very swiftly," plays a soft accompaniment on the swell organ with the left hand, while the right is employed in rushing through a scale passage on a loud great organ; or accompanies "beasts and cattle" with an overpowering full pedal organ; "creeping things" by a series of semitones played on the great with the right hand, the soft swell being manipulated by the left; and "flying fowl" being imitated by a violent shake on a shrill stop. Much, however, can be done by a player of good taste. For instance, it is perfectly legitimate—nay, desirable—that in such a passage as

"Sing unto the Lord with the harp; with the harp, and the voice
of a psalm.

With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before
the Lord, the King "

that the organist should as far as possible imitate the tone of the harp, trumpet, and cornet. Again in the verse

"There's not a plant or flower below
But makes Thy glories known;
And clouds arise and tempests blow
By order from Thy throne."

it is obvious that the accompaniment for the first two lines must be of a very different character to that which is suitable for the last two; but it is a matter of opinion how far an organist should go in imitating "tempests" or storms of any kind. It is far better to err in doing too little rather than too much in that direction, for beyond a certain point it becomes ludicrous.

The practice of occasionally playing the melody on a solo stop—either in its original position, or an octave higher or lower according to circumstances and the taste of the player—is decidedly good. It is not necessary that the treble should always be the part so played, as one of the

other parts, or a new melody entirely may be used with equal effect, care always being taken of course that the rendering is grammatically correct. The following arrangements of "Holley" may be taken as examples. In Example II the treble part is played as a solo, the alto and tenor parts being assigned to a soft swell accompaniment, and the bass to the pedals coupled to swell.

Example II.

Great Organ, 8ft. soft stop.

The first system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature (C). It contains a melody of eighth and quarter notes. The middle staff is in alto clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. It contains a sustained accompaniment of chords, with a 'Sw. diap.' (Swell Diapason) marking above the first measure. The bottom staff is in bass clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. It contains a sustained accompaniment of chords, with a 'Ped. soft 16ft. coupled to sw.' (Pedal soft 16 feet coupled to swell) marking above the first measure.

The second system of the musical score continues the three-staff arrangement. The top staff continues the melody from the first system. The middle staff continues the sustained accompaniment, with a 'Sw.' (Swell) marking above the first measure. The bottom staff continues the sustained accompaniment, with a 'Ped.' (Pedal) marking above the first measure.

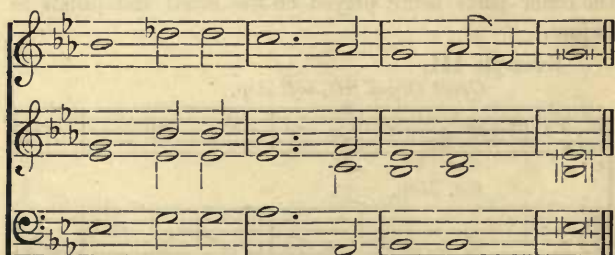
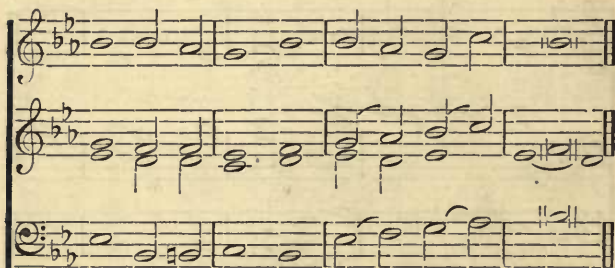
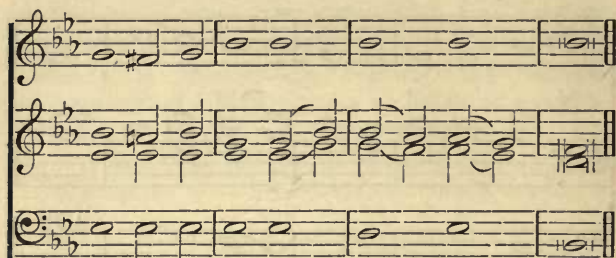
In Example III the tenor part is played as the solo, the other parts being played on the swell and pedals as before.

Example III.

Great Organ 8ft. soft stop.

Sw. diap.

Ped. 16 ft. soft stop coupled to sw.

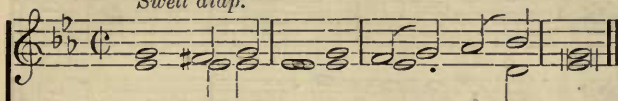


Another way is to play the tenor or alto part in its original position as a solo on the great organ, the accompaniment being played on the swell and pedals (see

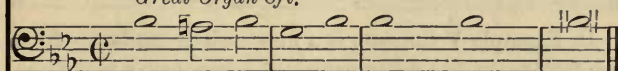
Example IV). This method of playing a solo part is particularly useful to correct any faults in the corresponding vocal part.

Example IV.

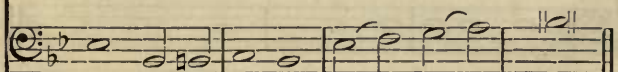
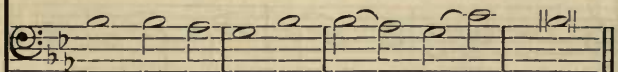
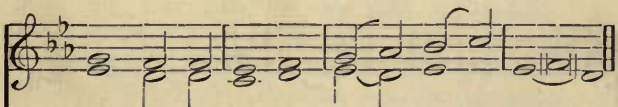
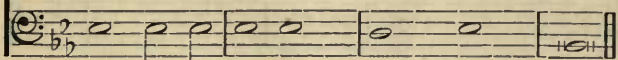
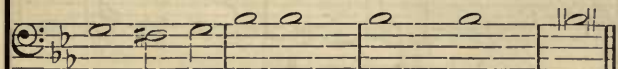
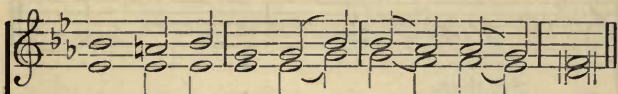
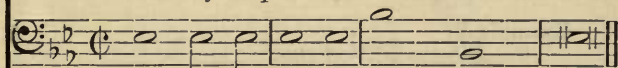
Swell diap.

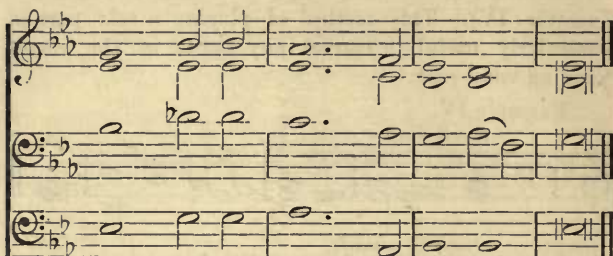


Great Organ 8ft.



Ped. 16ft coupled to sw.

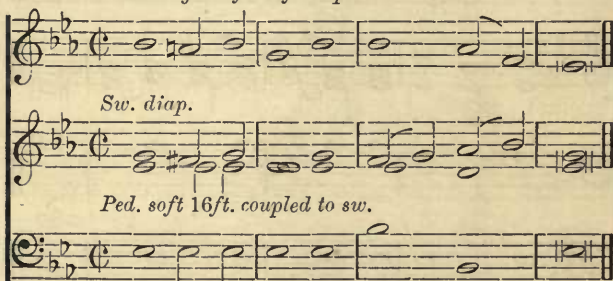




In Example V the solo is a new melody made up from the four parts, the accompaniment again being played on the swell and pedals.

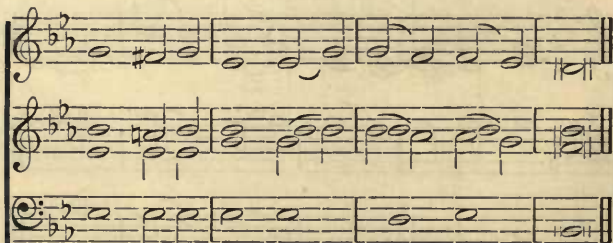
Example V.

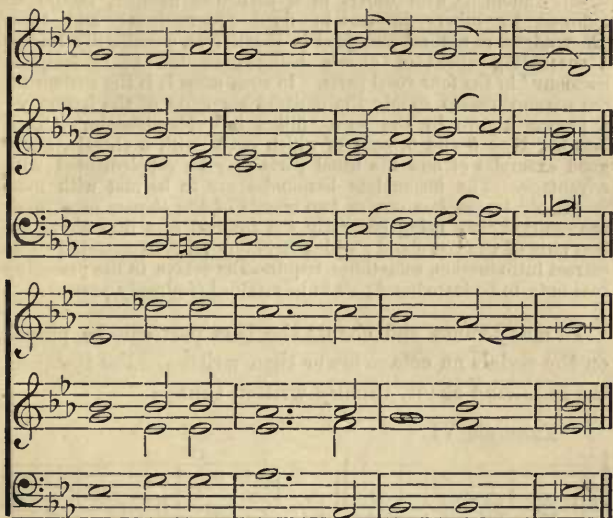
Great Organ 8ft. soft stop.



Sw. diap.

Ped. soft 16ft. coupled to sw.





In the last method the new melody might be arranged so as to be higher than the other parts in which case both hands could be used on one manual.

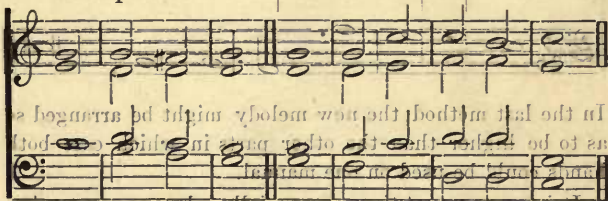
It is necessary at times—especially when accompanying the hearty singing of a large congregation—to play more notes than the four set down as the vocal parts, or the effect will frequently be very thin and insipid. In respect to this matter we cannot do better than quote the words of that excellent and much respected church musician, Dr. E. J. Hopkins, who in an article on “Accompaniment” in Grove’s “Dictionary of Music and Musicians,” says—

“In accompanying English psalm tunes it is usual to make use of somewhat fuller harmony than that which is represented by the four written voice-parts. The rules of musical composition, as well as one’s own musical instinct, frequently require that certain notes,

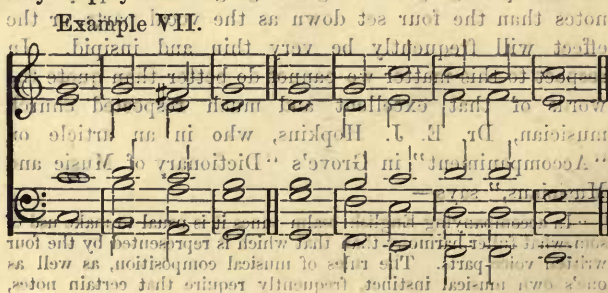
when combined with others in a particular manner, should be followed by others in certain fixed progressions; and these progressions, so natural and good in themselves, occasionally lead to a succeeding chord or chords being presented in 'incomplete harmony' in the four vocal parts. In such cases it is the custom for the accompanist to supply the omitted elements of the harmony; a process known by the term 'filling in.' Mendelssohn's Organ Sonatas, Nos. 5 and 6, each of which opens with a chorale, afford good examples of how the usual parts may be supplemented with advantage. The incomplete harmonies are to be met with most frequently in the last one or two chords of the clauses of a tune; the omitted note being generally the interval of a fifth above the bass note of the last chord; which harmony note, as essential to its correct introduction, sometimes requires the octave to the preceding bass note to be introduced; or to be retained if already present."

In many tunes and chants the bass part can be played on the pedals an octave lower than written. For instance, the following chant, usually written thus—

Example VI.

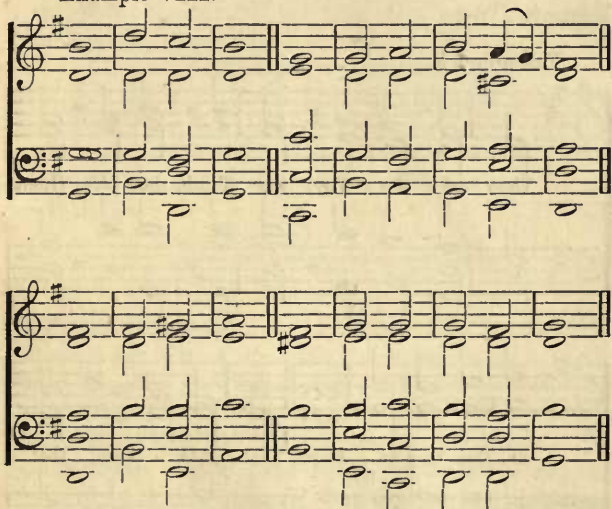


may be played as follows—



This arrangement would be very unsuitable in such a case as the following, for the bass part, as will be observed, (see Example VIII) becomes entirely altered when some of the notes have to be played in their original position and others are played an octave lower.

Example VIII.



We occasionally meet with a line of a hymn requiring a distinct break on the middle to give the full effect. Take for example the following:—

“Thou art the Way*; to Thee alone, &c.”

“Thou art the Truth*; Thy word alone, &c.”

“Thou art the Life*; the rending tomb, &c.”

“Thou art the Way*, the Truth*, the Life*;

Grant us that Way to know*,

That Truth to keep*, that Life to win*,

Where joys eternal flow.”

At this point * in each instance, the organ, in addition to the voices, should almost if not entirely cease for a moment. Some think the best plan is to pause over these emphatic words, but in our opinion that interferes with the rhythm. The better plan seems to be for the organist to cut the notes somewhat short, thus (see also Example I):—

Example IX.

Thou art the Way, the Truth, the Life; Grant

us that way to know, That Truth to keep, that

Life to win, Where joys e - ter - nal flow.

It may under some circumstances be better not to make a complete break at the crotchets (possibly the pedal may be held down), but as a general rule it will be found to answer well. Unless a rendering of this kind is adopted, the effect in some places will be totally lost, and even occasionally more than lost, for the playing will convey the opposite of the true meaning of the words. For instance, if the line

“Jesus lives! no longer now”

is played and sung straight through without a break after the word “lives,” the meaning has gone. And a person who would play so mechanically as that, would probably, as a matter of course, make a break at the end of each line.

“Jesus lives, no longer now

Can thy terrors, Death, appal us:

Jesus lives, and this we know,

Thou, O Grave, canst not enthrall us.

We should, therefore, in the second line be enquiring whether the terrors of death can appal us, and in the third line, first state a fact which is the foundation of the whole Christian religion, and go on to say we are aware of that fact, as if it had only just been revealed to us. The whole verse, would thus become completely chopped up, and made into nonsense. It is absolutely necessary, therefore, that an organist should beforehand carefully study the words to be sung, and make use of pauses, breaks, &c., as he may find most appropriate to convey the full and proper meaning.

Two very common faults which an organist has to contend with in congregational singing are singing out of tune and dragging. How can he remedy them? A congregation is more liable to get flat than sharp, and when a fall in tone is discovered, means should be immediately applied to correct it, or it may get so bad as to be generally

observable. The best plan is to draw all the foundation stops, and thus obtain a solid volume of tone. If it happens in a hymn it is well at the end of the verse to sustain the chord rather more than usual, to draw the attention of those in fault to the flattening. This will generally cure it, especially if the following verse is begun fairly loud by the organist. If the voices become sharp, the quickest remedy is to get the singing down to *piano* or *pianissimo* even, for in nine cases out of ten the fault is the result of singing too loudly. The above cure for flattening, sometimes answers equally well to remedy sharpening.

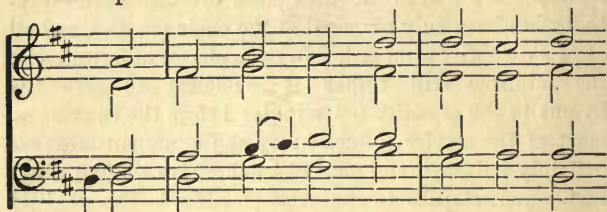
Dragging is almost sure to take place if a verse or two are sung very softly by a large congregation. There seems to be a natural tendency to sing a soft verse slower, though, as is frequently the case, the tune is too slow to begin with. To keep the time up to proper speed, the best plan is for the organist to play *staccato*, especially the pedals. This almost invariably marks the time distinctly enough to call the attention of the laggards behind to their position.

It is utterly impossible to lay down any definite instructions as to what stops, or how much organ to use in an ordinary way in accompanying congregational singing, as so much depends upon the size of the congregation, the amount of spirit put into the singing, the size and position of the organ, and many other details. The organist must use his own judgment. It is a good plan, however, for him occasionally to find a deputy, that he may sit in the congregation and hear the effect of his instrument. In this way he ought to be able to measure accurately the quantity of organ required to support and control the singing in all its varieties of light and shade.

Let us now carefully consider the best mode of accompanying the hymns, chant, and anthem, for these usually make up the musical portion of a Nonconformist service. We will in the first place presume that everything has been duly prepared at the choir practice, and all details carefully arranged. In some places, unfortunately, the minister still thinks it sufficient to give the hymns to the organist ten minutes before the commencement of the service. Such hurry and unpreparedness are certainly indecent, and good and expressive singing under such circumstances is almost impossible. The minister should let the organist have the hymns, &c., for Sunday in sufficient time before the weekly practice that a proper selection of music may be made. A satisfactory service should then be the result. Of the various ways of "giving out" the hymn the best seems to be for the minister to announce the number and the number of the tune and then read as much as he thinks proper, afterwards reannouncing the numbers. The tune is then played over, and the singing begins immediately. The advantage of this plan is that there is no break between the playing over and the singing, but hearing the tune immediately before rising, the congregation get the tune, time, and key correctly, and are able, therefore, to begin to sing promptly and with spirit. The organist should always bear in mind that the "playing over" is not a species of musical puzzle for the congregation to find out what the tune is. It should be played clearly, and at the same speed at which the singing is to go. If the tune is new or not well-known the best plan is to play the melody on a solo stop as suggested in Example II. The congregation having risen, an important point is how best to begin the tune. Some think the proper way is to put down the full chord at once, and thus lead off, that is, to play the tune

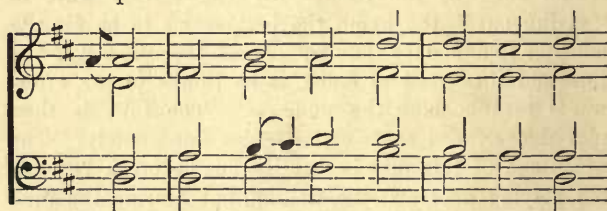
exactly as it is written. Others prefer to put down a short pedal note first, thus :—

Example X.



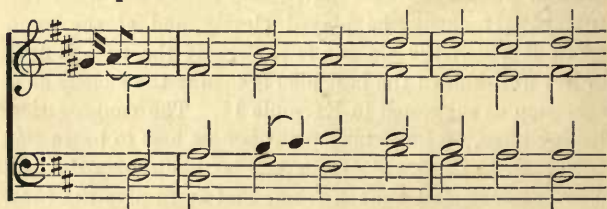
Many commence by giving the treble note first, thus :—

Example XI.



While some give two short preliminary notes, the first a semitone below the treble note, thus :

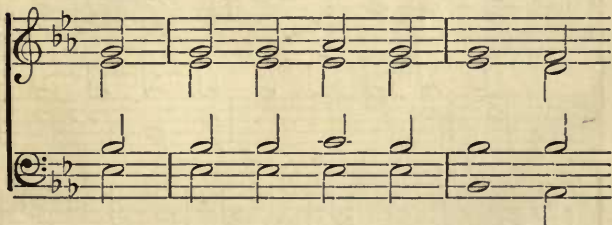
Example XII.



Our experience is that the plan as indicated in Example XI is the best. The first note of the melody is thus given, and if struck for an instant only, before commencing, it acts as a kind of signal to "prepare arms" previous to the "fire," when the full chord is struck.

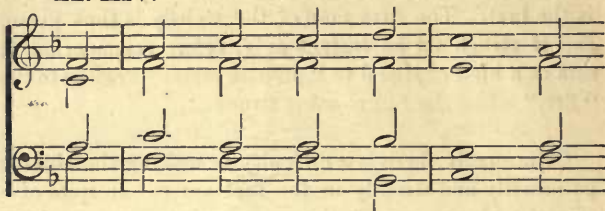
Occasionally there is a difficulty in making the singing go heartily and steadily in the first verse. In spite of a correct "playing over," the congregation are uncertain as to the time, and there is consequently a want of "attack." To meet this difficulty it is well to play the first line or two (or the verse if required) in a *staccato* style, as this so well marks the passage from one chord to the next. It is also desirable (if the words and music are suitable) for the choir to sing the first verse in unison, as this gives boldness to the tone, and fulness to the melody which should materially assist the congregation to take up the tune. There is always some uncertainty as to beginning, on the part of a congregation, when the first chord or two of a tune are the same, as in the following example:—

Ex. XIII.



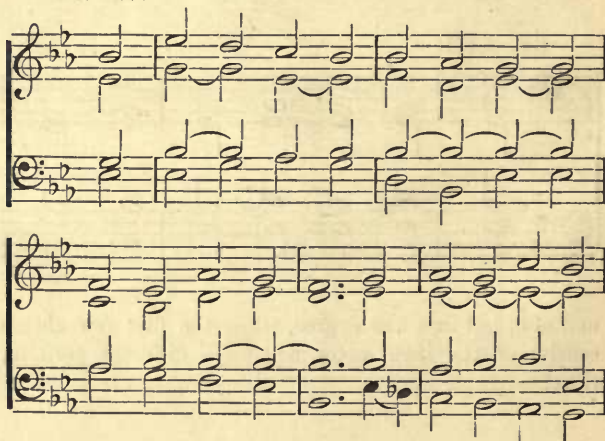
and also, but in a less degree, when the first few chords consist of the same notes, but in a different position, thus:—

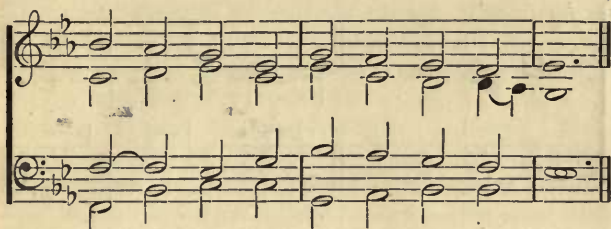
Ex. XIV.



In such cases it is essential that the organist should play these repeated chords very *staccato*, and so mark the time distinctly. It is undesirable that the *staccato* style should be used right through the hymn, as the effect becomes "choppy." The tone should rather be sustained by means of ties as in the following example (XV). It must be observed, however, that any repeated notes in the melody should not be tied, but always distinctly struck again; also that though there can be no objection to the pedal notes being sustained, it is better that the ties should be applied to the alto and tenor parts.

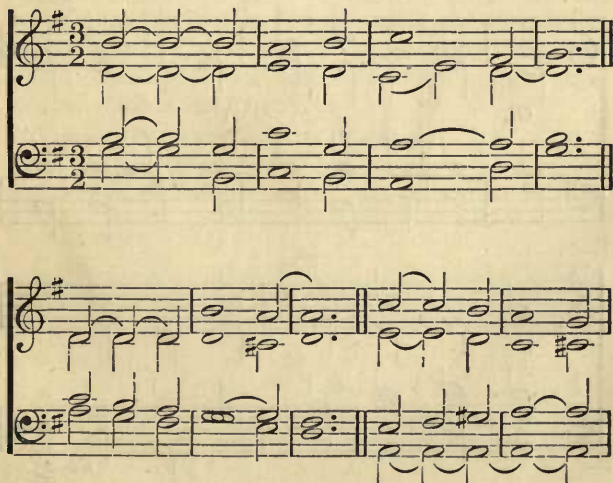
Ex. XV.

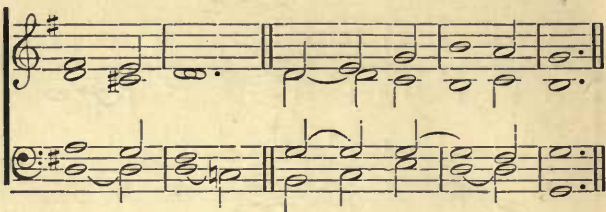




Many young organists are under the impression that organ playing should always be as sustained as possible, but in psalm tunes the effect of this is decidedly bad. For instance, how insipid and cloudy Dykes' fine tune would be if rendered according to the following *legato* arrangement:—

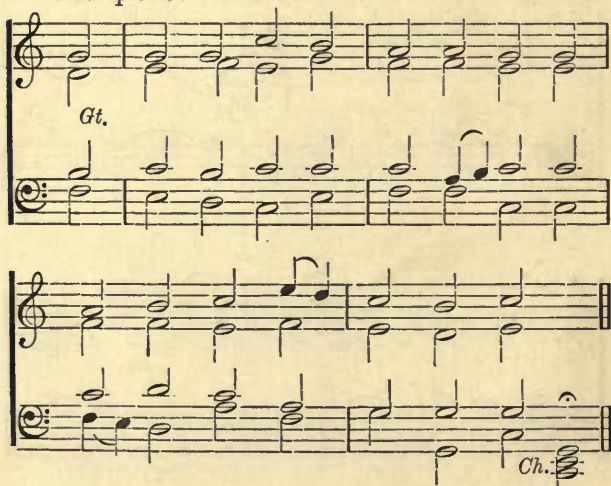
Ex. XVI.





Having referred to the best way of beginning a tune, we must now consider the best mode of finishing it. We once sat near one of the most eminent organists of the present day when accompanying a large congregation, and noticed that at the end of each verse he played a common chord in the lowest octave on a soft choir organ, and the same moment raised his right hand and foot so that nothing but a growling sort of noise came from the choir organ. The following will explain the process :—

Example XVII.



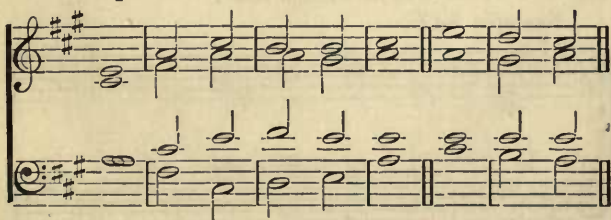
This does not seem to be a satisfactory finish. Some simply raise the hands and feet abruptly, but this appears to be too sudden a stop. The best plan is to take up the hands, sustaining the pedal for a moment only, and shutting off pedal to manual coupler (if drawn). This gives a quiet and subdued finish. A distinct break should be made between each verse, and at the end of the last verse it is well to transfer both hands from the great to a soft swell, and gradually but quickly reduce the tone till ultimately a soft pedal note is all that is heard.

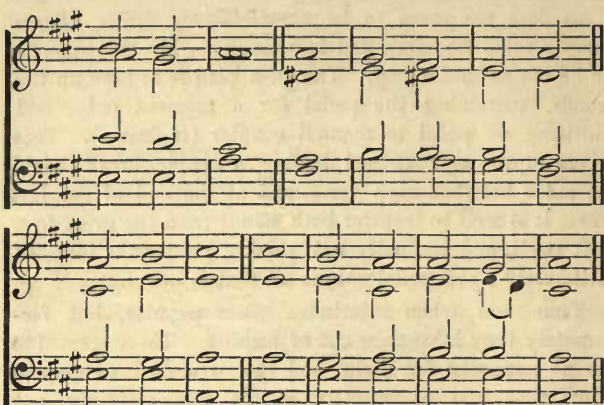
Time was when interludes were popular, but fortunately they have gone out of fashion. There seemed to be no necessity for them, and the wretched extempore stuff that was occasionally played was certainly not worthy of a public hearing.

The speed at which hymns should be sung should be moderate. The terrific rate adopted in some Church of England places is truly alarming, while the dull and monotonous drawling in many dissenting chapels takes all cheerfulness and spirit out of the worship. Composers would do well to put the metronome mark to their tunes, as some guide to the time.

A few years ago in many churches it was usual to begin each line of nearly every hymn with a double length note, thus:—

Example XVIII.

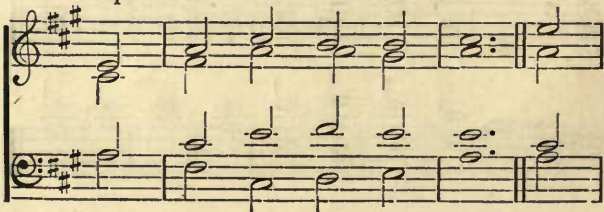


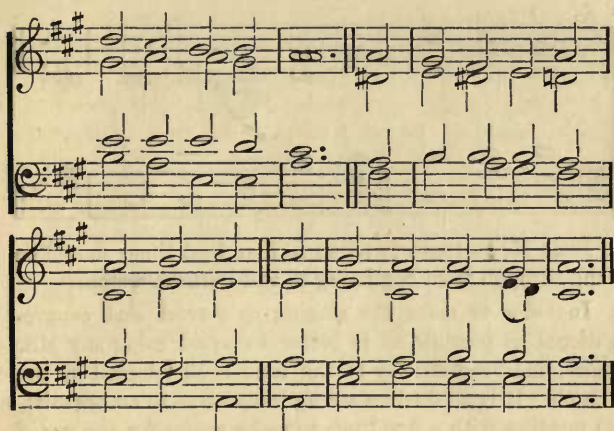


The "why" and "wherefore" of this arrangement it is impossible to conceive, unless it was to make the singing unsteady, and out of rhythm; if so, the object was thoroughly accomplished. Even those who formerly defended this arrangement have seen the error, and now, in most places at least, these distressing long notes are discarded.

Example XVIII may be quoted as showing another defect in arrangement. For the sake of rhythm (in Short Metre Tunes) the chords at the end of the first, second, and fourth lines should each be half as long again, and the chord at the end of the third line half the length. The tune would then be written thus:

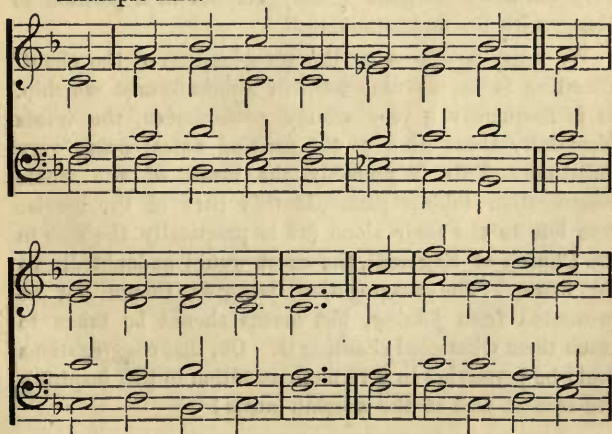
Example XIX.

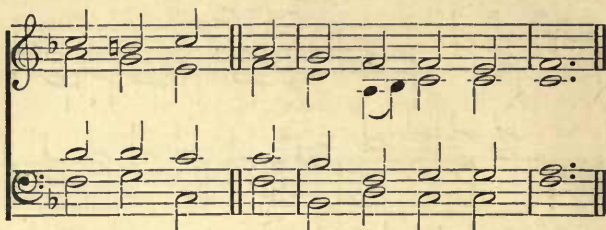




For the same reason Common Metre tunes (written in four beat time) should be sung with no stop at the end of the first and third lines, but making the last chord of the second line a three beat note, thus:—

Example XX.





Long Metre tunes (written in four beat time) should be sung through from beginning to end without a stop.

In order to make the singing as correct and congregational as possible, it is better to avoid using any MS. tunes, and keep strictly to the tune book adopted by the church. It is no doubt a strong temptation to an organist, on meeting with a fine tune, to make copies for the use of the choir. If the congregation could be supplied as well, there could be no objection, but as they would have to learn their parts by ear, the harmonies introduced would probably not be very musical. Moreover, musical people very naturally complain if they are not in a position to sing "with the understanding."

We must now pass to the consideration of the chant. Chanting is not a strong point in Nonconformist worship. It is frequently a very cloudy performance, the words (especially those sung to the reciting notes) being very indistinct. This is probably the result of the whole congregation taking part. If this part of the service was left to the choir alone (as is practically the case in the Church of England), the effect would undoubtedly be far better. The congregation, however, should not be prevented from joining, but means should be taken to teach them what good chanting is. Oh, that congregations could be persuaded to give more attention to this inspiring and ancient part of the worship music!

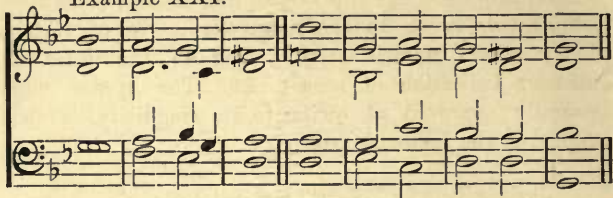
There are many systems of pointing in use ; some very complicated, owing to the numerous marks of various kinds ; others unsatisfactory owing to the want of sufficient indication of accent, &c. The system most generally approved of, owing to its simplicity, is that adopted in the following passage.

Praise waiteth for Théé, O | God, in | Zion :
And unto Théé shall the | vow... | be per- | formed.
O Thóu that | hearest | prayer
Un'to | Thee shall | all flesh | come.

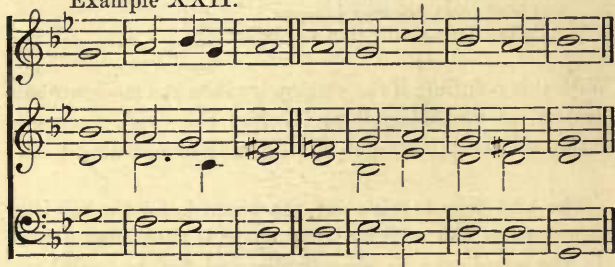
With this pointing, if the singing is taken at a moderate rate (instead of "gabbling," as is often the case), a congregation should quickly get into the way of chanting well.

The best way to give out the chant is for the minister to announce the number ; the chant is then played over (in the same way as already directed for the tunes) and the singing commences at once. The organist may begin in the way suggested in Example XI, and should certainly play the first verse very clearly, marking it well. There should be a short pause at all commas, colons, &c. &c., in the recitation passages, as there would be in a correct reading of the words. There should be no break between the verses (as in the hymns) unless there is a distinct change of sentiment. An organist will find great scope in chanting to give full expression to the words, and many are the means at his disposal. Variations in quantity or quality of organ tone will do much, but a change of chant, especially from major to minor, will do more. The following suggested way of treatment may be taken as an example of what can be done. The words are taken from "The Revised Psalter" recently published, edited by the Rev. Rigby Murray.

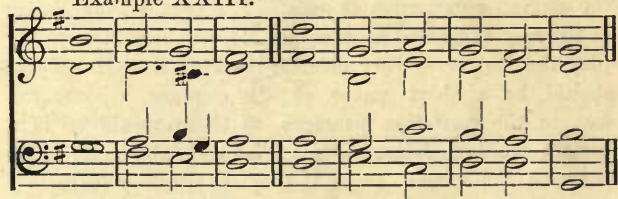
Example XXI.



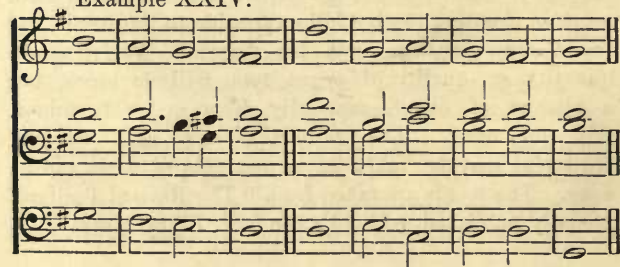
Example XXII.



Example XXIII.



Example XXIV.



Ex. XXI.—*Gt. Org. mf*

- 1 The Lord answer thee in the | day of | trouble ; ||
The Name of the God of Jácob | set thee | up on | high ;

Ex. XXI.—*Sw. mf*

- 2 Send thee hélp | from the | sanctuary. ||
And | strengthen: thee | out of | Zion ;

Ex. XXII.—*R. H. on Gt. or Ch. ; L. H. on Swell.*

- 3 Remémber | all thy | offerings, ||
A'nd ac- | cept thy | burnt... | sacrifice ;

Ex. XXI.—*Swell without pedals.*

- 4 Gránt thee thy | heart's de- | sire, ||
And ful- | fil... | all thy | counsel.

Ex. XXIII.—*Gt. Org. f, coupled to swell, f. Voices to sing in unison.*

- 5 We will triumph in Thy salvation,
And in the Name of our Go | we will sét | up our | banners : ||
The Lórd ful- | fil all | thy pe- | titions.

Ex. XXIV.—*R. H. f on Gt. or Ch. ; L. H. on Sw.*

- 6 Now know I that the Lórd sáveth | His an- | ointed ; ||
He will answer him from His holv heaven
With the sáving | strength of | His right | hand.

Ex. XXIII.—*First line, sw. f, without pedals ; second line. Gt. f, with pedals.*

- 7 Some trust in cháríots, and | some in | horses : ||
But we will make mention of the Nánie | of the | Lord our | God.

Ex. XXIII.—*First line, full sw. shut ; second line, full sw. open.*

- 8 They are bówed | down and | fallen : ||
But wé are | risen . and | stand... | upright.

Ex. XXIII.—*First line, full Gt. coupled to sw. ; second line, Gt. f coupled to sw.*

- 9 Save, | ... | Lord : ||
Let the Kíng | answer us | when we | call.

Ex. XXIII.—*Full Gt. coupled to full Sw.*

Glory be the Father, &c.

In verses 1, 5, 9 and Gloria the organ parts should be doubled. It is usual to make a slight *rallantando* at the end of the last verse just before beginning the Gloria. It will be understood that in the foregoing example, the stock

of the organist's resources for obtaining varied effects has not been exhausted by any means. It must be taken as simply suggesting various ways of relieving the monotony of hearing the same chant played over in exactly the same way for every verse. Much that has been said in reference to the accompaniment to the hymns applies with equal force to chanting, and therefore need not be repeated.

The anthem, as part of the service, is gradually growing in popularity. At first it was regarded somewhat as a performance, but as congregations become accustomed to it they find it a pleasing and helpful feature of the service. It is generally thought necessary that the anthem should be such as the people can join in, the consequence is that to meet this condition it has to be of the simplest kind. It would be far better, on all grounds, if this part of the service was left entirely to the choir. In that case, compositions of far greater merit and beauty than those usually heard in the churches would be used. There are some fine anthems which are musically of the simplest kind, but as a general rule it must be admitted that compositions which are simple enough for an ordinary congregation to sing, are of the weakest and most insipid description.

The minister usually announces the anthem, and reads the words. The organist then has to play something to give the congregation an idea of the music. Some simply give the first chord, and then lead off at once; others play the first phrase; others extemporize an introduction in the key of the anthem, but having no other resemblance to what is to be sung. Many maintain that if any introduction at all is played it should end on the dominant. Musically, perhaps, this is a good plan, and if the choir alone sang the anthem it would be the best.

But if the congregation are to join in, it is more than probable that the ending on the dominant would result in an unsatisfactory start. The best plan, therefore, under these circumstances is to play the first phrase of the anthem, and then modulate back again to the key note thus:

Example XXIV.

The musical score for Example XXIV consists of two systems. Each system has a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The lyrics under the first system are: "Hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer." The second system continues the musical phrase without lyrics.

In this way the congregation hear how the anthem begins, and the end of the introduction is the same chord that they begin on.

Most anthems are abundantly supplied with marks of expression to assist both organist and singers to give a satisfactory rendering.

We hope and believe that the anthem will, in course of time, grow into a more important place in the service. As musical education spreads, and the firm adherence to old-fashioned notions dies out, music of a much higher order will be used in the churches. May that day quickly come!

VOLUNTARIES.

THE Voluntary is the only opportunity the organist has of displaying his abilities as a solo player. Formerly the voluntary was extemporized, as the name seems to imply, but in the present day, when music is published at so cheap a rate, and also possibly because the gift of extemporizing really well is rare, written pieces are usually played. One great advantage of an extempore voluntary is that the organist can bring it to a speedy close when required to do so, whereas in a set piece he may have to play it over and over again (if short), which is very monotonous to both player and congregation; or if it happens to be a long piece he may have to break off in the middle, which frequently spoils the effect. Extempore playing, however, should not be attempted unless it can be done fairly well, but an organist should make a point of exercising his powers in that direction at his private practice. A good knowledge of harmony and counterpoint is necessary for an extempore player, though these *alone* are not sufficient. There must be genius, and some amount of originality in addition, or the result will be mechanical and savouring of an exercise rather than of an inspiration.

There should be distinct character in the voluntaries, and as far as possible they should be in harmony with the general tone of the service. The "opening voluntary" ought to be devotional and quiet, and such as tends to bring the congregation into a religious state of mind.

Anything of a light nature ought to be carefully avoided. Upon special occasions, such as Christmas Day, Easter Sunday, &c, &c., something more jubilant, exciting feelings of joy and gladness, would not be inappropriate, though there is a danger of playing something that is wanting in dignity, and therefore unsuitable to so majestic an instrument as the organ. The "concluding voluntary" is generally a piece for the loud stops—in fact, it is rare to find a piece called a "concluding voluntary" which is not registered "full organ," or something approaching it. After most services probably it is suitable to perform a piece requiring the fullest resources of the instrument, but after some sermons it would exhibit the worst taste possible to play anything but a plaintive, pleading, prayerful composition. An organist must therefore use his discretion in the selection of his voluntaries. Not knowing beforehand what the subject of the sermon is, he is not always prepared with suitable music, but arrangements might perhaps be made for him to be supplied with this information. The "collection voluntary" is usually very short, unless there is a very large congregation, or the mode of making the collection is bad. A soft piece is invariably used, but the noise made by the coins being dropped into the box or on to the plate, considerably interferes with the effect. This probably accounts for the "collection voluntary" occasionally being a very slovenly performance.

As so much depends upon the capabilities of the player, and upon the size of the organ he has to perform upon, it is difficult to give any very definite advice as to the selection of voluntaries. An excellent plan for organists is to subscribe to Novello's or Augener's Music Library, as this enables them to be well supplied with music, and what is also very necessary, to have a frequent change.

Fortunately there is no lack of organ music to suit the requirements of all kinds of players. It is advisable to play chiefly music that was composed specially for the organ. "Arrangements," however, should not be entirely discarded, because congregations sometimes like to hear favourite sacred melodies played as voluntaries, and occasionally these airs can be most appropriately used. If possible it is well always to play music written in three staves, the advantage of which is obvious. All operatic selections which are clearly unsuited to public worship should be avoided. The music itself may be fine, and even sacred in character, but as it would probably bring thoughts of the opera to some, it should not be used. We once heard the march from "Tannhauser" played as a concluding voluntary, much to the disgust of not a few who heard it. Though Bach's fugues are invaluable as practice, our opinion is that they are not adapted as voluntaries for an ordinary congregation. Generally speaking, people do not understand fugues, and the performance of one seems to them to be mere noise without character or meaning.

* Taking it for granted that organists study Bach's fugues, Mendelssohn's sonatas, also his preludes and fugues, Handel's concertos, and other standard works of a similar class, we should advise students seeking good organ music (that is, music written for the instrument) to procure Henry Smart's compositions, many of which are published by Novello & Co., some by Ashdown, and other firms. They vary in difficulty and in character, but few English writers have produced such genuine organ music. Dr. Hopkins has also written some pleasing short pieces admirably adapted for church use. Mr. W. T. Best's six books of pieces (Novello & Co.) are likewise good, also his numbers of "St. Cecilia" (Augener & Co.), containing

very interesting compositions. Silas' works are of a high order, while Dr. Spark's "Quarterly Journal" (now extending to about twelve volumes) contains a large number of pieces varying much in quality. Of the French school, Guilmant stands at the head, his writings being for the most part well worthy of study. Of a lighter character Batiste's compositions may be named, but though some are good and certainly "pretty," too much Batiste is to be avoided. Wely also has the reputation of writing some effective pieces.

Of "arrangements" there is certainly no lack. Mr. W. T. Best's five volumes (Novello & Co.) should be in the hands of every organist who is at all proficient. Some of the numbers are fairly easy, but others, owing to the fulness of the chords, and variety in treatment, present considerable difficulties. George Cooper's arrangements may also be commended, and Dr. Hopkin's "Select organ movements" both published by Novello & Co.; Dr. Westbrook's "Voluntaries" and "Young Organist" are likewise good; Stone's "Classical Organist" (Brewer & Co.) contains some very useful compositions. Of shorter pieces, such as are required for collection voluntaries, J. Hiles' "Short Voluntaries," Novello's "Short Melodies" may be recommended, though they are written in two staves only.

In addition to the above, some very excellent pieces in various styles are published by Weekes & Co., Schott & Co., Stanley Lucas & Co., &c. &c., full particulars of which can be seen in the catalogues issued by those firms.

CHORAL FESTIVALS.

CHORAL Festival services in England have hitherto been almost exclusively confined to the Established Church, Nonconformists, for the most part, having looked on them with disfavour, as being somewhat of a High Church—not to say Ritualistic—tendency. It is no doubt true that they are usually held in churches where much attention is paid to the music; but, except in a few isolated cases, it cannot be said that they are made the means of encouraging views contrary to those generally held by Evangelicals. The only object the promoters of these attractive services have is the improvement of the musical part of the worship of the church, and it is satisfactory to know that the efforts put forth have yielded fruit, “some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold.”

Why should not such services be held frequently amongst Nonconformists? They necessitate and encourage long and careful practice, they increase the interest of the congregation in worship music, and in a variety of other ways do good. It is to be hoped that ere long they will become general, and that the results will be as satisfactory amongst dissenters as amongst episcopalians.

The first question in arranging for a choral festival service is, who shall start it and undertake all the work of organization. Occasionally several choirs are joined together in an association. In that case, probably, there

would be a committee, secretary, and other officers appointed who would be the managers, and the labour would be divided amongst them. As, however, there is rarely any connecting tie between the choirs of neighbouring chapels, the idea of a festival generally originates with one person, and upon him falls almost entirely the burden of organization. He has to communicate with the various choirs to ascertain if they will take part, and how many singers each choir will send, afterwards forward the necessary music and supply all information.

In towns of moderate size there ought to be little difficulty in getting a good number of Nonconformist choirs to join in the festival, but in country districts, where the chapels are situated at some distance from each other, matters are not so easily arranged, owing chiefly to the inconvenience of getting from one place to another.

Taking it for granted that sufficient singers to form a good festival choir have undertaken to attend, the next question is, who is to be the conductor of the music? If there be an association a conductor would probably be appointed at the time of the formation of the society; if not, the most suitable person to act as conductor for the occasion would be the organist of the church in which the service is to be held. Upon him should devolve the duty of selecting the music. In doing this the musical abilities of the choirs would have to be carefully considered, but something requiring work, and likely to be popular should be chosen; the hymns ought to be bright and the psalms appropriate to such an occasion. A *Te Deum* in service form is also advisable, and of course an anthem, which should be worthy of the name. As unison singing is very effective it would be well that some of the music chosen should be written for that purpose. We have ventured to publish a series of "Popular Hymns set to Festival Music"

(may be had from R. Clarke, 9, Plumtree Court, Farringdon Street, E.C.) with the view of supplying a want for music of this kind. Great care should be taken to avoid anything of a weak or sentimental nature which would be likely to lower the taste of the choir and congregation.

The music having been selected and distributed amongst the choirs, how are they to be taught, and how is uniformity in rendering to be obtained? If the choirs are scattered some distance apart, it will be quite impossible for the conductor to attend the practice of each choir very frequently. Probably the best plan is for the conductors of the various choirs to meet the chief conductor at the outset, when he can explain to them fully how he wants the music rendered, and the several effects he wants brought out. It is then their duty to instruct their respective choirs, and prepare carefully for the day of festival. If several choirs are situated near to each other, and they can arrange to practise together, much trouble will be saved, and better results likely to follow, for in singing, as in most other things, "union is strength." When the rough edge has been taken off, the conductor should visit the several choirs, or centres where the choirs meet, to see that uniformity of rendering is being taught, and to point out any details which may seem to him necessary to secure good singing. One visit from the conductor—if he be really efficient—will frequently make a wonderful change, and the singers will sing with increased confidence. Shortly before the day appointed for the festival, one, or, if possible, two full rehearsals should be held, in order that the finishing touches may be given to the singing, and all arrangements made to prevent any hitch or mishap at the festivals. The choirs should know where they are to sit, and how they are to reach their places, and a variety of other details necessary to secure perfect order and decorum.

The day of festival having at length arrived the service would probably be held in the evening, as that time would be most likely to suit the largest number. The ministers of the several churches should be invited to take some part, but it would add to the interest of the day if some well-known preacher could be persuaded to preach the sermon, which should be appropriate to the occasion. As the festival is intended to be a service, and not a concert, under no circumstances should there be a conductor to beat time. There may be a difficulty in commencing together in some of the anthems or choruses, where there is no preliminary symphony, but that ought to be overcome at the practices, so that the singers—though many in number—should now start as with one voice and keep well together, singing steadily and correctly right through to the end.

We should suggest the following as a suitable

ORDER OF SERVICE.

- (1) *Hymn* of a bright processional kind.
- (2) *Short Introductory Prayer* by Rev. Mr. A.
- (3) *Te Deum* or *Magnificat* in service form.
- (4) *First Lesson* to be read by Rev. Mr. B.
- (5) *Chant*.—Two or three Psalms set to various chants.
- (6) *Second Lesson* to be read by Rev. Mr. C.
- (7) *Anthem* of a standard character, with solos and quartets if possible.
- (8) *Prayer* by Rev. Mr. D.
- (9) *Hymn*.
- (10) *Sermon*.
- (11) *Offertory*, during which a solo might be sung, if the services of a suitable singer are available.
- (12) *Hymn*.
- (13) *Benediction*.
- (14) *Final Chorus* or *Full Anthem*.

Such a service would present sufficient variety to suit all

tastes, and thus the congregation (which would no doubt be a large one) would be pleased and probably instructed. As for the singers, if all passed off satisfactorily, they would be well repaid for their hard work of preparation, they would also feel a greater interest in church music, and find themselves more competent to conduct the worship-music in their respective chapels.

The question of expenses in connection with such festivals is one that requires the consideration of the promoters. The cost of music alone for a service such as proposed would be considerable, if the united choirs mustered strongly. There would also be many other necessary expenses, so in the end the total would amount to a good round sum. Probably the offertory would be a liberal one, but frequently it is insufficient to cover the outlay. If there be a properly organised association of choirs there would be funds from subscriptions, &c., but if the festival be promoted by one or two friends it would be well for them to get a guarantee fund before incurring any liability.

In some places it would be possible to have band as well as organ accompaniment. That would be an additional attraction, and would probably add more effect to the service. It is far better, however, to have organ accompaniment alone, unless an efficient band can be got.

These psalmody services are very common in Wales—very few districts being without their annual meeting of the kind. They are looked forward to with much pleasure, and the heart-stirring singing makes a marvellous impression both on the singers themselves, and those listening to them. Mr. J. Spencer Curwen in a very interesting paper on one of these Welsh festivals (*Studies in Worship Music, Second Series*) says—

“ I have spoken of the Welsh as solid and grave in manner ; but at these festivals they are often deeply moved. There is one custom

which used to obtain among the Methodists in England, and which the Welsh still preserve. When the end of a hymn is reached, it the temper of the congregation is rising, some one will start the last four lines again, and they will be repeated with growing fervour, three, four, six, or even eight times. Then it is that the strong emotional nature of the Celt is stirred. Women sing with eyes fixed upon vacancy, wholly lost in spiritual ecstasy, the tears filling their eyes, the rocking to and fro of their bodies betraying the inward tension. The men, though they conceal it, are no less deeply touched. One feels the contagion of the excitement as the voices of the singers tremble with emotion.

It is the religious training of the common people in Wales that makes them love psalmody, and devote to it their fine natural gifts as singers. To see the working-folk flocking in numbers to the chapel, losing a day's work thereby, and counting it all enjoyment; to see mistress and maid standing side by side among the singers—this is a sight which fills the heart with joy. We may depend upon it, that, if we can dispose the hearts of English working-folk to the same end, we may emulate the Welsh psalmody festivals.

It is very desirable that these services should take root and become general in England. For some time an annual meeting of the kind was organized at the City Temple, but unfortunately, for the present it has to be dropped owing to pressure of musical work in other directions. In the provinces, too, we occasionally notice an attempt to start them with more or less success. We should like to see them held in every district, and for this purpose, we would suggest that churches situated tolerably close to each other, should form themselves into an association as the foundation of such a festival. It would, perhaps, be wise to begin on a small scale, and gradually rise to greater things. What the end may be it is impossible to tell, but there is no reason why a festival, equal to some of our famous cathedral festivals, should not be the outcome of these services. Will our leaders of psalmody take the matter into their consideration, and see what can be done in their respective localities?

NEEDED MUSICAL REFORMS.

To most people it is clear that our services are capable of being much improved, and made more attractive especially to those who are at present outside the church. There is, however, great diversity of opinion as to what these reforms should be. We cannot enter fully into the subject, but the following paper which was read by the author at a recent conference on "Nonconformist Church Music, how to improve it and make it more attractive," may be taken as a small contribution towards a solution of the difficulty.

Music has always been an important feature in the services of our Nonconformist churches. Forty or fifty years ago it was almost exclusively confined to the singing of hymns, but in recent years we have chanted the psalms and sung anthems, though it must be admitted that in some places these additions to our worship met with much opposition. In the present day, when we hear of numerous proposals which, if carried out, must certainly place strong temptation in the way of many persons to forsake the church, does it not seem desirable, if not a duty, that we should provide some equally strong attractions, with the view of retaining in the fold these wavering brethren? For instance, there is the proposal to open museums and picture galleries on Sundays, and only a few weeks ago Sir George Grove, a man of great influence in the musical world, suggested that sacred

concerts should be given on Sundays. I will express no opinion upon the wisdom or otherwise of these schemes. No doubt much can be said on both sides. But I maintain that the Church should bestir herself, and endeavour to provide some counter attractions, so that those who are somewhat unsettled in their mind, but whose general inclination leans towards spiritual things, may be prevented from entirely severing their connection with the Church. No doubt our services can be altered, and made brighter in various way, but the object of this Conference is to consider how we can improve our music, and make that part of our worship more attractive. I believe there is a very general feeling, especially among our young people, that something more should be done in the way of music than has hitherto been customary. This can hardly be wondered at, because all our children are now brought up to be musicians in a more or less degree. Children of what are known as "respectable" people are nowadays considered very uneducated if they cannot either sing or play—especially as the children of the lower classes are all taught music in our Board Schools. It is clear, therefore, that whatever we have been in the past, we are now fast becoming a musical people, and consequently that which suited the taste of our congregations a few years ago, does not satisfy the present generation. What we require is an advance in our church music in proportion to the progress made in our general musical growth. The whole stereotyped form of worship, which has been very useful in its time, now needs revision in order to adapt itself to the needs of the present day. Do we wish to accomplish our journeys by means of stage coaches? Do we desire to pay the high rate of postage we used to pay years ago, when our letters took days to reach their destination? Do we regret the introduction

of the telegraph and telephone? Certainly not; and I maintain that if the Church is to fulfil her proper sphere, and do her sacred work efficiently, there is as much necessity for her to be vigilant, and to make full use of the means at her disposal, as there is for the world to be alive to the best means of promoting its own interests. What alterations should be made, and how they should be made, are questions upon which there will no doubt be great diversity of opinion, but it is to be hoped that we shall this evening hear suggestions from many points of view, which will be helpful to us in endeavouring to find a solution of the problem.

I wish to offer to your consideration a few suggestions, which I think might with advantage be adopted at least in most of our churches. Owing to the time allotted to the reading of this paper, I can do very little more than mention them, as it would be quite impossible to enter into what I believe are strong arguments in their favour, or to attempt to answer objections which I anticipate may be urged against them.

I think something more might be done in the way of singing to the congregation, they being simply listeners. All, or nearly all anthems should be sung by the choir alone, for very few congregations can sing them correctly, and the attempt to join in spoils the effect. It is much better, therefore, that the congregation should worship with the heart, rather than with the lips. Some, I know, say this arrangement would make the anthem a performance and not worship, but is it necessary to take part audibly, in order to worship? If so, the prayer is not worship and the sermon is a performance. Many who object to choir or solo singing, travelled miles to hear Mr. Sankey sing some of his favourite melodies, and came away in raptures. But why should his singing be worship,

and the choir's rendering, say of Mendelssohn's "Hear my prayer," a mere performance, and consequently objectionable? Again, it is anything but helpful to worship, to a musical soul, to hear an ordinary congregation attempt to sing the anthem. The trebles are out of tune, the contraltos improvise their part by singing what they call "seconds," but which usually means a series of "thirds" below the treble part, the tenors are almost inaudible, while the basses growl out the melody two octaves below the soprano. Yet according to some this is worship, and a rendering by a body of trained voices alone is a performance! The choir, who are supposed to be musicians, find it necessary to meet for practice, but the unmusical congregation frequently feel themselves equal to singing by sight (for they rarely attend the practices), and the consequence is that what might have been effective, and truly an act of worship, if left to the choir alone—becomes a musical jumble which distresses and irritates even those who have but slight musical knowledge. In this church we adopt a medium course. In the morning we have a fairly simple anthem, and our *repertoire* is purposely kept small, so that, by frequent repetition, the congregation may, by degrees, learn them. Then, in the evening, we generally take a more elaborate composition, such as a chorus and solo from the oratorios, or one of the many excellent anthems published by Novello & Co. and Curwen & Sons. I find that those containing solos or quartets are most liked. By singing these special anthems the congregation hear something better than is usually found in a book of anthems, and, moreover, they are much more interesting to the choir, and induce them to attend in larger numbers. We print the words of the anthem to be sung, and distribute copies all over the church, so that the congregation can follow.

In the place of one voluntary or somewhere in the course of each service, I should suggest a solo being sung, provided a suitable singer is available. Such airs as "Come unto Me," "O rest in the Lord," "He was despised," "If with all your hearts," and many others of a similar kind can be appropriately used in this way. If sung after the sermon, the judicious choice of a solo may be most effective.

Would it not be well occasionally to make a Sunday evening service almost entirely a service of song? This is done constantly in the Sunday-schools with evident enjoyment to the children, and if the plan was introduced into the Church, it would probably be appreciated by the "children of older growth." Such a service might be made very attractive. Sometimes popular hymns might be sung by the whole congregation, interspersed by solos and anthems by the choir. Another time an oratorio or cantata might be given by the choir, and, if possible, on these occasions it would be well to have orchestral in addition to organ accompaniment. That such services as the latter are much liked is proved beyond a doubt by the vast numbers who go to St. Paul's Cathedral and other churches three or four times a year, when the *Passion Music*, *The Last Judgment*, *St. Paul*, and other works of a similar kind are sung as part of the service. Why such heart-stirring compositions should be banished from our churches, and considered as only appropriate to the concert room, I am at a loss to conceive. Would it not be wise on our part to rescue these sacred masterpieces from the secularism that must of necessity attend them in the concert halls, and adopt them as the Church's choicest specimens of worship music? Do let us abandon all bigotry and narrow-mindedness in this matter, and let us be guided by common sense and by the requirements of

the present day, rather than by the traditions and customs of the past. Depend upon it the men who maintain that the singing of some paltry melody by Mr. Sankey is worship, and the rendering of the *Messiah* as part of our service is a performance, are the men who are driving our young people out of the Church, and who are placing serious obstacles in the way of many who are inclined to come in.

I think that much greater expression can be put into our hymn singing than we have usually been accustomed to. It is very satisfactory to find that in almost all the Hymnals and Psalters recently published, marks of expression have been affixed to the words. This, certainly, is helpful to good and tasteful singing, and should convey the meaning more accurately to our minds. But I think something further may be done to secure expressive singing. Occasionally—that is, in such hymns as admit of it—certain verses may with effect be sung by the choir only. A hymn frequently varies in sentiment, some verses demanding vigorous singing, while others call for tender treatment. Why should not the latter be sung by the choir, or four voices even, the congregation being silent? I have heard hymns rendered in this way with marvellous effect. So much more pathos and intense feeling can be put into words if sung by a quartet of sympathetic voices instead of by a whole congregation. Quite recently, a professional singer, engaged at one of our London churches, where hymns are treated in this way, told me it brought tears to his eyes when he and the three other vocalists sang a verse of “Nearer, my God, to Thee.” Do not, however, suppose that I advocate the suppression of congregational singing of hymns. Far from it. I do all I can to promote it, as those who attend the Sunday evening services in this church can testify. The full hearty sing-

ing of a large and enthusiastic congregation cannot fail to make some impression upon the hardest heart. At the same time, I believe a little variety is an improvement, and where the words seem to call for specially soft singing, and a good quartet is at hand, greater effect, I maintain, may be put into a hymn by singing it in the way I now advocate. I urge it also from a musical point of view, though this is of secondary consideration. My experience is that if a hymn, or even a verse, is sung softly by a large congregation, there is sure to be a flattening and dragging; whereas if a quartet sang the soft part this would be avoided.

I should be glad to see a return to the old custom of having orchestral instruments used regularly in our services. If players were found amongst the members of the congregation forty or fifty years ago, surely there are more players, and certainly more efficient ones, available in the present day. There would be very little difficulty, I believe, in our large churches in getting together a small band composed of willing and earnest workers in the cause. The effect of an accompaniment, of brass instruments especially, is most thrilling and inspiring, provided there is a large body of voice tone.

Our congregational singing might be much improved if we adopted a plan which seems to answer well in Wales. A congregation—or sometimes several combined—prepare certain selected hymns and tunes for a day of festival, when they all meet together in some large chapel, and these hymns are sung publicly, under the direction of a conductor chosen for the occasion, who is generally a well-known musical man. He does not hesitate to stop them, where he thinks it necessary, to point out their faults, and so the meeting becomes a large singing-class. Though an organist or choirmaster, attached to one of the

congregations, may be a thoroughly competent conductor, it probably interests the people more if a stranger is called in to fill that post at the festival. Such a scheme is, I think, worthy of a trial, for it gets the congregation to the practices, and, fearing the adverse criticisms of the conductor, they endeavour to sing correctly and with expression. For several years the various Welsh congregations in London have held such a gathering, when I have accompanied for them—a popular Welsh musician being the conductor—and I can, therefore, testify to the utility of these meetings.

Our choir-singing might be improved if we adopted another plan common in Wales, that is, of having choir competitions. I am glad to know that, although originated in Wales, such competitions are gradually taking root in England. Mr. Spencer Curwen inaugurated a movement of this kind at Stratford a few years ago, and I understand it has done much for the culture of music in that district. The Congregational chapels of Windsor, Uxbridge, Slough, Reading, Maidenhead unite together to hold an annual Eisteddfod, when the choirs from various chapels compete for prizes. Having been adjudicator for two years running, I am in a position to say that the singing I heard on the occasion of my second visit was a great advance upon what I had previously heard from the same choirs, and I was informed that this satisfactory improvement was entirely the result of the work done in preparation for the competition. The several chapels in our large towns might combine together to get up one of these competitive meetings, and in the country the various villages might join for the same purpose. These friendly contests are a great incentive to careful and lengthened practice, the benefit of which is good and permanent.

From congregations and choirs I will now pass to organists. It would add very much to the general harmony between minister, deacons, and organist, and certainly would be very helpful to the singing, if, when selecting an organist or choirmaster, the church chose one in full sympathy with the work and service of the place. I have known an instance of a Roman Catholic being appointed to one of our churches, and as for High Churchmen and others who are in spirit strongly opposed to Nonconformity, the cases of their receiving appointments at our hands are very numerous. It seems to me most desirable that such appointments should not be made. A Roman Catholic cannot possibly have any real interest in our worship, and but for the salary he gets he would certainly not be willing to accept the appointment. Churches should be careful to seek an organist who will show a further interest in the work than merely pounds, shillings, and pence, and, especially is it necessary that they should select one who agrees with the general spirit of Nonconformity. *Having got such a man*, I am strongly of opinion that the worship music of the church would benefit if all musical matters were placed entirely in his hands, and under his control. He should be made responsible for that department of the work, and interference with him should not be permitted. I as strongly maintain that an organist's chief aim should be to aid the minister in his work in every possible way. I have known of men, good competent men too, who have lost all interest in their work simply because they were made into mere machines to play what they were told, and then afterwards to be informed by Mr. A, that they played too fast, by Mr. B, that they were too slow, by Mr. C, that they played too loud, and by Mr. D, that they played too soft. Every man should be allowed to manage his own

department, and the result would probably be satisfactory; but interference one with the other, is almost certain to end in want of good feeling. I feel I can the more openly and freely speak on this point, because my relations with both minister and deacons during the whole of my experience, have always been of the most cordial kind, and I, therefore, from personal experience, know nothing of the unpleasant state of things I have described. I have no doubt there are many who could say precisely the same thing. I, however, hear from friends and others what they suffer, and therefore I plead for the organist to be placed in his proper position. Encourage him in his work, for in this way you will largely increase his interest in the cause, and your sympathy will be responded to by an increased zeal, and an eager desire to be of real and permanent service to the church.

Possibly there may be some who are inclined to think the various suggestions I have brought before you do not deserve much consideration, as they are made by an organist, and organists frequently have the reputation of looking at matters from a musical point of view *alone*, regardless of all other sides of the question. I may say, however, that having been born in Nonconformity, and believing in its principles to-day more firmly than ever, I advocate these reforms in our music, more as a musical Nonconformist than as a Nonconformist organist, though in both capacities I believe they would be highly beneficial to our church. I say, therefore, let the church awake to the fact that if she is to retain a firm hold on the people, she, like all other institutions, must adapt herself to the spirit of the times; let us make full and free use of the "Divine Art," in our worship of God; let us cast aside all narrow prejudices which must of necessity becloud a clear and generous view of things; let us turn a deaf ear

to all bigoted and old-fashioned opinions which tend to make our services dull and monotonous; let us be guided by the spirit of progress which is so actively at work in almost all directions in the present day. Then shall our churches become as "shining lights," cities set upon a hill, places of attraction and ultimately havens of rest to many who are now groping hopelessly in the fog of doubt and unbelief; and our children (who seek brightness and cheerfulness in public worship, a perfectly natural state of things in all young life,) will find that they need not attend ritualistic and Roman Catholic churches to hear good music and an attractive service, but that the Non-conformist church, the church in which they were born, having bestirred herself and put forth equal attractions, now becomes to them their home, as it has been the home of their fathers, and promises to be the centre of their religious life and activities till they are called to take part in the music and worship of Heaven.

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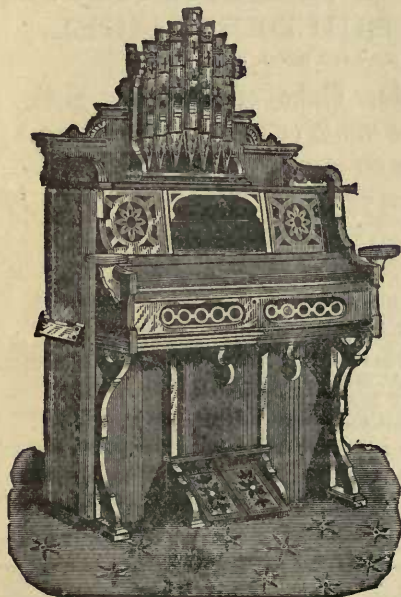
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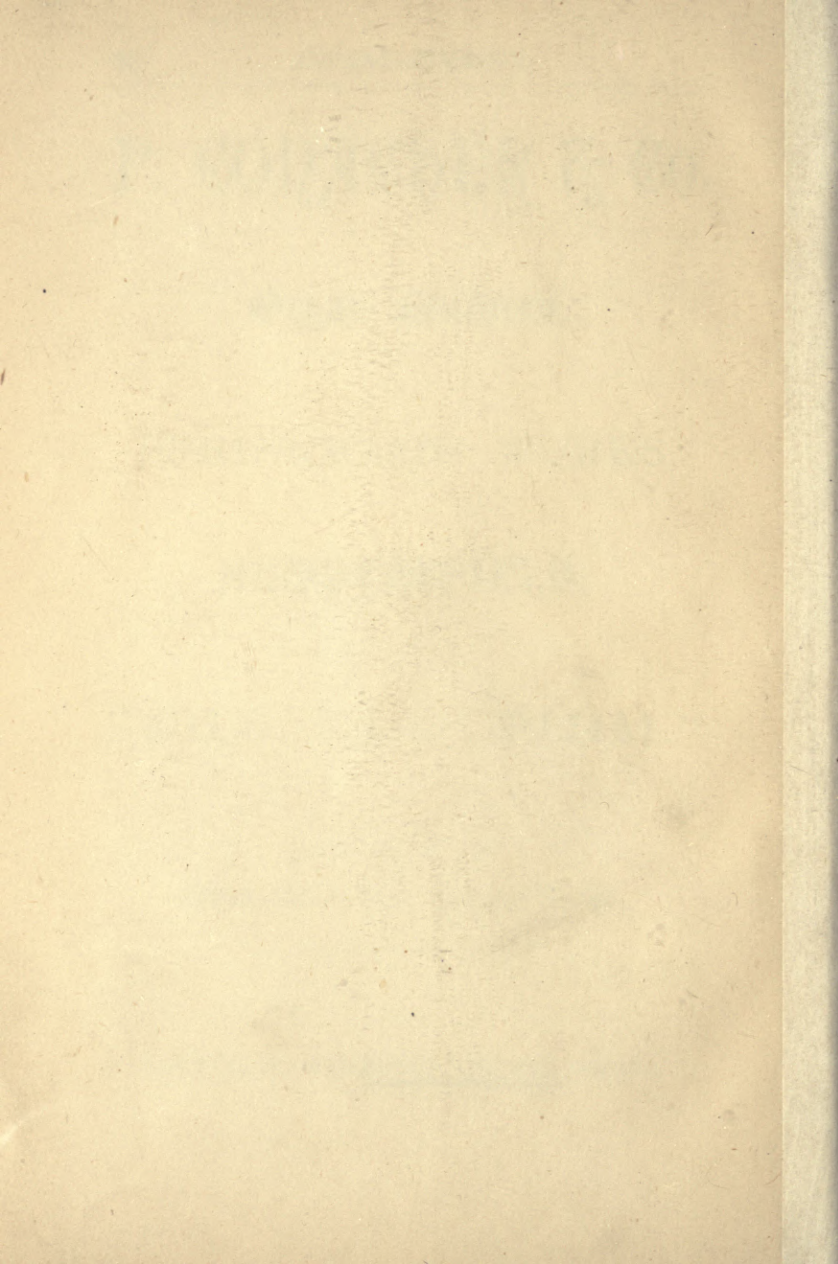
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